

occur in the non-breeding season in the bays and estuaries of south-eastern Africa, these being *N. p. phaeopus*, *N. p. alboaxillaris* and *N. p. variegatus*. The first named is plentiful, while the second, which has a restricted breeding range in comparison with the first, is probably more general than the circumscribed records from Moçambique and Natal suggest, while the last named is almost certainly of rather irregular occurrence, the main wintering grounds being further to the east than Africa. Recently, *Calidris ruficollis* (Pallas), which also breeds in eastern Siberia and has not hitherto been suspected of occurring in Africa, has also been taken in Durban Bay, Natal (Clancey, 1964).

I am grateful to Mr. J. D. Macdonald, Keeper of the Bird Room, British Museum (Natural History), London, for the loan of relevant material.

References:

- Clancey, P. A. 1964. *Ibis*, 106, 2, pp. 254, 255.
 Dementiev, G. P. and Gladkov, N. A., 1960. *Systema Avium Rossicarum*, vol. ii, p. 101.
 Peters, J. L., 1934. *Check-List of Birds of the World*, vol. ii, p. 261.
 Ridgway, R., 1919. *The Birds of North and Middle America*, part viii, pp. 396, 397.
 Rudebeck, G., 1963. *South African Animal Life*, vol. ix, pp. 501–503.
 Sclater, W. L., 1924–1930. *Systema Avium Aethiopicarum*, part i, p. 135.
 Voous, K. H., 1960. *Atlas of European Birds*, p. 138.

A further note on the egg of the Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius* Stephens

by CHARLES R. S. PITMAN

Received 11th February, 1964

I referred ⁽¹⁾ to an egg of *Cuculus solitarius*, found in Southern Rhodesia, which was not the usual coffee colour, but was pale green marked with a few rusty-brown spots, some of them very pale and very small; and from which a Red-chested Cuckoo eventually hatched and was reared to maturity. I have now received from Mr. G. H. H. Brown, a Regional Government Agent (prior to independence known as District Commissioner) in the Rift Valley Region of Kenya, the description of a somewhat similar egg of this cuckoo. It is a very blunt oval and reckoned to be about 20–22 mm. by 17–18 mm. (but not precisely measured); the ground colour fairly light blue, densely freckled all over with medium and light brown, and closely resembling the eggs of the British Blackbird. The precise locality is Baragoi in the Samburu District, an area of open, treeless plains of grass and small bushes, intersected by watercourses lined with several species of acacia thorn-trees and *Ficus*. The Red-chested Cuckoo is not uncommonly heard calling along these watercourses. The egg was found on 20th December 1963 at a time of the year when the rising sun comes over the horizon at 0645; it was laid between 0700 and 0715. The nest tree was a small 15 feet high acacia, in fresh leaf, within 20 feet of a Government Rest House. The cuckoo suddenly commenced to call a few minutes before 0700, and at such short range the repeated call was "quite deafening". Peering into the tree, Brown saw a Red-chested Cuckoo sitting on a small nest and when he moved a little closer to get a better view a small shrike—not identified as the sun was in his eyes—almost certainly a *Tchagra*—flew out of the nearby leafy branches, but was only in view for an instant. The nest was a typical *Tchagra* nest. As

this bird did not return and no other small bird was seen there, it was not possible with certainty to establish the identity of the host. According to Brown "The cuckoo fell silent for a few minutes after I returned to my seat. It then called again repeatedly for about a minute, and fell silent again for a further few minutes. At 0712 it again began to call repeatedly; at some time during this second silence it had turned round on the nest, though I did not see it actually do this. After over a minute of continuous calling, it again relapsed into silence; but very shortly after, called three or four times and then abruptly flew away". He was able to watch the cuckoo through binoculars at close range for quarter of an hour. No other cuckoo was seen or heard in the vicinity at the time, nor did he hear any answering calls to those from the bird on the nest. Unfortunately, he did not look on the ground below the nest to see whether an egg had been ejected. As Brown was due back there in a week he left the cuckoo egg in the hope of making some further observations, but when he returned the egg had disappeared and the nest was empty and deserted. There was no trace of any egg on the ground below.

This is a particularly valuable observation as it is an additional record of an unusual type of *C. solitarius* egg which has (*l.c.*) been recorded from Southern Rhodesia, from the Belgian Congo (oviduct) by Chapin (²: 190), and *vide* (³: 68) figured by Nehr Korn and said to come from 'Massai-land' in East Africa. A *C. solitarius* egg from the nest of the Cape Wagtail, *Motacilla capensis* sent me from South Africa is pale greenish heavily marked with shades of brown and may link the previously described spotted or freckled egg with the well-known normal type which is so profusely and finely marked as to appear almost immaculate.

References:

¹ Pitman, C. R. S. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, 81 (3) 48-49, 1961.

² Chapin, James P., *Birds of the Belgian Congo*, 2, 1939.

³ Friedmann, Herbert, *The Parasitic Cuckoos of Africa*. Washington Academy of Sciences, 1948.

Nesting materials used by *Cisticola juncidis* (Rafinesque)

by DEREK M. COMINS

Received 16th March, 1964

The nest of *Cisticola juncidis* has been described by Lynes (1930, 79) as:—
". . . of soda-bottle type . . . with entrance facing *skywards*; made by binding together a large number of soft green grass blades with plant fibres and cobweb, and lining copiously with plant down . . . In its materials, the nest of *juncidis* more or less resembles those of other *Cisticolae*, but the type of architecture and particularly the skyward entrance hole is quite unique and identifies the owner with certainty."

A nest (E.L. 8833) donated to the East London Museum by Mr. R. A. Bode of Idutywa, Transkei, Cape Province, agrees in appearance with the above description. The nest is 11 cm. in height; the diameter is 5 cm. at the base and 3 cm. at the apex; the diameter of the entrance hole is 2.5 cm. The nest is suspended (the base being approximately 5 cm. from ground level) in a living tuft of *Eragrostis curvula*. The walls and base of the nest consist of a thin tissue which binds the inner surfaces of the grass leaves. The leaves are not laterally contiguous: threads of material from the nest are laced round the leaves at intervals.